

102
REMARKS
ON A
SERMON

PREACHED AT
PETERSFIELD,

June the 17th, 1722.

By the REVEREND
Mr. WILLIAM LOWTH,
*Rector of that Parish, and Prebendary
of Winchester.*

IN A LETTER to Himself.

IN WHICH

His Characters of an Apostolical Church are considered, the Dissenters Right to them is asserted and maintained, their Ministers Call and Ordination defended, their Publick Worship vindicated, and Mr. Lowth's Reflections on them and their Assemblies are proved to be Unjust and Groundless.

By JOHN NORMAN,
of Portsmouth.

LONDON:

Printed for JOHN CLARK, at the Bible
and Crown in the Strand, near Cheapside.
M. DCC. XXII.

Price Six Pence.

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REMARKS

ON

Mr. LOWTH's SERMON, &c.

REVEREND SIR,



THE Sermon which you preach'd in your Church at *Petersfield*, June the 17th, 1722, and have since communicated to the World from the *Press*, did not come to my Hands before the 13th of *October*; if it had, this Letter would have waited on you sooner.

I am not, I confess, apprehensive, that it concerns me more than any of my Brethren, to take a publick Notice of your Discourse, because you have not done me the Honour to consider mine*.

* The Nature and Extent of *Christ's Church* considered; a Sermon preach'd at *Petersfield*, February 13, 1721-2, at the Opening of a Meeting-House there.

which, you are pleas'd to say, was the Occasion of it. Whether you thought it below one of your Character to regard any thing offered by a *Dissenter*, or found my Notion about the *Nature* and *Extent* of Christ's Church so supported by divine Authority, as well as the concurring Sentiments of some of the greatest Men of your own Communion, that but little Success could be expected should you attempt a Confutation of them, you can best determine. Let that be as it will, I hope, Sir, you will excuse the Liberty I have taken to animadvert on your *Sermon*; in which, if I am not mistaken, there are several things advanced, not only without a sufficient Warrant, but manifestly injurious to *Truth* and *Christian Charity*.

You thought, I perceive, that you *should have been wanting* in your *Duty*, if you had not us'd your *best Endeavours* to preserve the People of your Parish in the Communion of your Church; and, I cannot see that any have Reason to blame you for so doing; because it ought to be supposed, that you are fully satisfied with your own way of worshipping God, and convinced of its being better than any other. But what Necessity was there, Sir, for *misrepresenting* the *Dissenters*, and giving such an Account of them and their Worship, as you are not able to justify?

If I am not very much out in my Opinion, many of your *Auditory* are already sufficiently prejudic'd against their fellow *Protestants*, who differ from them. I my self (when call'd to preach in your
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Town) was a Witness to such *Rage* among some of your *Flock*, as was a *Scandal* to the Christian Profession. I was in hopes, I must own, that they had been better taught, and was willing to impute their *rude* Behaviour to an intemperate *Zeal*, arising from the Prejudices of Education, rather than to any thing which they had heard from Persons who profess to be Ministers of the Gospel of Peace: But since I read your Sermon, I am inclined to think (forgive me, Sir, if I think amiss,) that the Fire which I saw among the People in the Street at that time, though of an *unhallowed* Nature, was kindled in the *Sanctuary*. This I am sure of, that if you had not a Hand in blowing up the Flame then, you have added Fewel to it now; and instead of perswading Christians to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, which, you say, is your hearty Prayer, as far as I can see, your Discourse is calculated to set them at a greater Distance from one another. But it is time for me to come to your *Sermon*. And because I would be as little troublesome to you and the World as possible, I shall forbear remarking on Passages which are of no great Moment, and not spend Time about Words and Phrases; though a Critick might (without a severe Examination) find Occasions enough to employ his Talent.

The *Text* which you made Choice of, is in *Acts* ii. 42. *And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer.* From which Words you propose to enquire:

First,

First, *What was the State of the Church of Christ in the Apostles Days.*

Secondly, *What Church, at this time, answers the Characters here given of a Primitive and Apostolical Church.* In which second Enquiry your design (as the Title of your Sermon shews) is to make it appear, that the Characters of an Apostolical Church are fulfilled in the Church of England, and that we are under Obligations to continue in its Communion. I shall carefully attend you throughout this Undertaking, and consider how you have made good your Proposals. But if I do not always follow you Step by Step, it is because I am willing to bring the scattered Parts of your Argument together, that your reasoning on the Subject may appear in a full Light; which you might have saved me the trouble of doing, had you thought fit to let the World see the Accuracy which you are undoubtedly Master of.

I. "The first Mark of a Primitive and Apostolical Church (you say) is its Members Continuance in the Doctrine of the Apostles, P. 6." This you endeavour to explain in P. 7, 8; and P. 17. you shew, that this Character is to be found in the Church of England. Well, Sir, in this we are agreed; and I shall have no Controversy with you about it: But then, I hope, you will allow, that Protestant Dissenters, of several Denominations, continue in the Apostolical Doctrine, as well as the Members of your Communion. It is known to the World, that we acknowledge the Scriptures to be the only Rule of Faith, as well as you; to those we always appeal;
and

and according to these we profess to form our Judgments as well as Lives *. These are read in all the Congregations within the Reach of my Acquaintance, every Lord's Day; though you have (P. 18.) ventured to affirm, with what View I will not say, that *there is more of the Scriptures read in your Church every Week, than is in many separate Assemblies throughout the whole Year* †. The Catechism which our Children are taught, is supported by Scripture Proofs, and the sacred Writings are as often referred to in our Sermons as in yours. To which I add, that the Dissenters have, I am persuaded, the Bible as generally in their Houses, as the People of the Church of England, and, I believe, are as well acquainted with its important Contents. All which must certainly amount to as good an Argument of Deference to the Word of God, as your making the reading of it so considerable a Part of your publick Worship; and especially if it be minded, that besides reading the Scriptures in your Churches, you read many Apocryphal Lessons too, for the sake of which (though they contain Relations that are false and fictitious) a considerable

* Under the Name of the *Holy Scripture*, or the *Word of God written*, are now contained all the Books of the *Old and New Testament*; all which are given by Inspiration of God to be the *Rule of Faith and Life*. Confess. of Faith by the *Assen. of Divines at Westminster*.

† The Bishop of Derry thought fit, some time since, to charge the Dissenters in Ireland with casting the Reading the Word of God out of most of their publick Assemblies. But the Rev. Mr. *J. Boyse*, in his *Remarks on the Bishop's Discourse*, and the *Vindication of them*, has convinced the World, that the Dissenters were abused.

Part of the *sacred Canon* is excluded, and many of your People are induced to entertain the same Veneration for the Writings of *fallible Men*, as for the Books which were drawn up under the Conduct of an *unerring Spirit*.

As to what you mention concerning the particular regard which *your Church* pays to the judgment of the *Primitive Church*, about the Sense of the Scriptures, P. 18. I cannot see that it is to your Purpose. Besides, if you can make any Advantage of it, we may do the same, there being as much Respect paid to *Antiquity* by the *Dissenters*, as it can reasonably challenge. We are not, indeed, convinced, that we are under any Obligations to *believe as the Church believes*; nor do we apprehend it to be our Duty to make the Judgment of *uninspired Men* a Standard for ours. We are for searching the Scriptures, and making the best Use that we can of the Capacities and Helps which God is pleased to give us; and when our searches are honest, we make no doubt of God's leading us into all necessary Truth, and accepting our Sincerity, though we should fall into some Mistakes, as you and all Mankind do and will. What Regard you are for paying to the Judgment of the *Primitive Church*, you have not told us; but if it be more than is fairly reconcileable with your subscribing, that *nothing ought to be esteemed an Article of Faith, but what is contained in the Scripture, or may be proved thereby**,

* See the 6th Article of the Church of England.

this will be so far from being an Evidence of what you seem to offer it for, that it will rather prove the contrary.

Well Sir, thus far we are come; your *Church* continues *stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine*, and so do our *Churches*. And methinks, I can't but congratulate my self and Friends, on our Agreement with you in this; because keeping that *Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*, you tell us. (p. 9.) is the *most essential Note of a true Church*.

Your Remark on this Head, relating to the *Church of Rome*, I heartily join in; for, as you rightly observe, *they are very deficient in making out that they have kept the Faith*. And, if you had pleased, you might have said the same, about the *uninterrupted Succession of their Church from the very Apostles*; of which the *Missionaries of that Church* are always making loud Boasts. But that is a Point which you treat with more Tenderness than the other; and for a Reason, which will be no Secret, when the next Head of your Discourse hath been examined. To proceed then,

2. "The second Character of an *Apostolical Church* (say you) is their living in a strict Union and Fellowship with the *Apostles*, that is, they continued Members of that Body or Society, which Christ had placed under their Government." P. 9. And then (p. 10.) you enter upon a Discourse, about Christians continuing in outward Acts of Communion, and tell us, how much the Unity of the Church depends upon their doing

so. What you have advanced on that Head, I shall have a due Regard to, before I take my Leave of you. But I chuse to consider that Part of your Sermon in a more proper Place; because a bare *continuing in outward Communion*, cannot be thought to be your principal Design. For that would be confounding your Method, and making your *second Mark of an Apostolical Church*, coincident with your *third and fourth*, and so reducing your *four Characters* to *two*.

That which you aim at (if I take you right) is, to shew it to be necessary (if a Church would prove herself to be *Apostolical*) that her Members should continue in *external Communion* with the *Apostles*. And because we who live at so many Ages distance from them, can't be said to have *Fellowship* with them in the same Manner as those Christians had who lived in their Days; therefore you tell us, (p. 13.) that *whoever lives in the Fellowship and Communion of those who succeed the Apostles, and first Teachers of the Church, continues in the Fellowship of the Apostles themselves*; and (p. 18.) you attempt to prove, that the Members of your Church do so. Your Argument then, if reduced to a *Syllogism*, would I suppose stand thus, viz.

Whoever is in the Fellowship and Communion of those, who succeed the Apostles and first Teachers of the Church, continues in the Fellowship of the Apostles themselves:

The Church of England is in Fellowship and
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Communion of those, who succeeded the *Apostles and first Teachers of the Church*, viz. the *Bishops*,

Ergo, &c.

I hope, Sir, I have hit your Meaning; if not, I submit to Correction. The *major* Proposition is in your own Words, and though it requires some Explication, and would admit of a Debate, you may, if you Please, for once, take it for granted. But the *Minor* wants Proof, and must be made good, before you can pretend any Right to the Conclusion. And here it will be expected (and very justly) that you should demonstrate, in the first Place, that the *Apostles*, as *Apostles*, had proper *Successors*; and then, that *Diocesan Bishops*, such as we have in the *Church of England*, are their *Successors*. These, Sir, are Things in which that Part of your Discourse, which I am now considering, is so nearly concern'd, that if you fail of producing sufficient Evidence for them, all that you have offer'd, about your having *Fellowship* with the *Apostles* (as you have explain'd it) will pass, in the Judgment of such, as read your *Sermon* without a Bias on their Minds in your Favour, as an Imposition on your Auditory and the World.

That the *Apostles* have any proper *Successors*, as *Apostles*, is what you have not attempted to prove, and, I believe, never will; it being an Undertaking which is attended with insuperable Difficulties. You know, Sir, that your great and learned

Dr. Barrow hath made it appear, by unanswerable Arguments, that " The Apostolical Office, as such, " was *personal* and *temporary*; and therefore, according to it's Nature and Design, not *successive* or communicable to others, in *perpetual* *Descendence* from them.* Successors without Doubt they have, (*viz.* Parochial Bishops or Presbyters) in the ordinary Branches of their Power; such as Teaching, administering the Sacraments, Church-Censures, Ordaining, &c. But not in those Branches of Power, which were *peculiar* to them as Apostles, and founded upon the Promise of extraordinary Assistance; for these (as a judicious Writer of ours very well observes †) are no more derivable to any Successors, than that extraordinary Assistance is. The Apostles then having no Successors, as Apostles, Diocesan Bishops will never pretend to that Character; Nor will you, I am sure, attempt to prove it belongs to them.

" That the most ancient Churches, those who " were planted by the Apostles themselves, held " their Bishops to be the immediate Successors of " the Apostles, " (as you say, p. 19. 'tis certain they did) is what I am free enough to allow you. That is, that they held their Bishops, or the Pastors of particular Congregations to be the Apostles Successors, in the ordinary Powers derivable from the

* Treatise of the Pope's Suprem. Fol. p. 77. † Mr. Boyse's clear Account of the ancient Episcopacy, &c.

erable Apostles, of which I before took notice : But
 if you mean, that they held their *Bishops* to be
 of Office *superior* to *Presbyters*, and maintained that
 they were the Apostles *Successors* in the Powers and
characters which belong'd to them as *Apostles*, this
 is affirmed without Proof. And if your *Parishioners*
 will take every thing you say upon Trust, you must
 not expect that others will do so; or that positive
 assertions, which have nothing to support them,
 will pass for substantial Argument. It is an easy
 matter to say (as you do, in your marginal Note
 in the afore-mentioned Passage in your Discourse)

"Tis certain that several of those, who were Dis-
 ciples of the Apostles, did exercise the *Episcopal*
 Office, and had the Care and Oversight of ma-
 ny particular Churches and Congregations; such
 were *Timothy*, *Titus*, *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, *Clemens*
Romanus, &c." But it is not so easy to convince
 the World, that it is as certain as you represent it :
 or indeed, that it is so much as *probable*.

As to *Timothy* and *Titus*, they were *Evangelists*,
 whose Work it was to assist the Apostles to con-
 vert the Infidel World, and to plant and settle
 Churches among them; but I could never yet see
 proved, that they had each of them, a *fixed*
Diocese, as our Bishops have, and that they were
 constituted by the Apostles, as the *stated* Governors
 of many Churches, with a Power to rule, not only
 the People, but the *Pastors* of these Churches; or
 that the Powers of *Diocesan* Bishops were appro-
 priated to them, All this hitherto wants Confir-
 mation.

mation. And then, as to *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, &c. that they, or either of them, had the Care and Oversight of *many* particular Congregations, remains yet to be demonstrated. That *Ignatius's* Judgment was for your Side of the Question, you think is *sufficiently known*; but if you would be at the Pains to examine the fair and just Account, which our learned Mr. *Boyse* hath given, * of all the Passages which he could meet with, in that *Father's Epistles*, relating to the Point in Controversy, and impartially weigh them, I believe you would find, that *Ignatius* is as favourable to our Cause as yours.

But what ever your Thoughts may be, we are well satisfied, that though he plainly enough intimates some Difference between the *Bishop* and his *Presbyters*; yet there is no Foundation to conclude, from any thing delivered by him, that there was any *Distinction* of *Office* between them. And I am persuaded you cannot shew, that there was such a *Distinction* for *two Hundred Years*, at least after the Christian Church was planted.

I know that we have been often challenged to produce any Instance, of a Church settled without *Bishops*, for above fifteen Hundred Years after Christ; (p. 19.) but that we have not been able to produce any Instance of that Kind, is a very strange Assertion.

* Clear Account of the ancient Episcopacy,

Polycarp, the Care of the Church, St. Clement's Epistle to that Church was written? A worthy Minister of ours hath proved, * that the Church of Corinth was governed by Presbyters, all the Lives of the two great Apostles, Peter and Paul, and made it probable, that it continued so Twenty or Thirty Years after their Deaths, if not much longer.

Till you can disprove it, then, here is an Instance of a Church settled *without Bishops* even in the *Apostles* Time, and for many Years afterward. And to let you see that more than *one* Instance hath been given, I beg leave to mention several more, which I find taken notice of by an *Author* who was no *Adversary* to Episcopacy; I mean the learned Bishop *Stillington*, who writes thus; † Now as to *Church-Government*, we may find some Churches *without Bishops for a long Time*, some but with *one Bishop in a whole Nation*, many Cities without any, where Bishops were common; many Churches *discontinued Bishops* for a great while, where they had been: ——— First then, some *whole Nations* seem to have been *without any Bishops at all*: ——— So if we may believe the great Antiquaries of the Church of *Scotland*, that Church was governed by their *Culdei*, as they called their *Presbyters*, without any Bishop

* Mr. Withers's Reply to Mr. Agate's two last Pamphlets, &c. 88—93. † *Irenicum*, 2d Edit. p. 6, 7.

“ over them, for a long Time. *Johannes Major*
 “ speaks of their Instruction in the Faith, *per sa-*
 “ *cerdotes & monachos sine episcopis Scoti in fide eru-*
 “ *diti*. But, least that should be interpreted only of
 “ their Conversion, *Johannes Fordonus* is clear and
 “ full, as to their Government, from the Time of
 “ their Conversion, A. D. 263. to the Coming of
 “ *Palladius*, A. D. 430. that they were only governed
 “ by *Presbyters* and *Monks*; *ante Palladij adventum*
 “ *habebant Scoti, fidei doctores ac sacramentorum mini-*
 “ *stratores presbyteros solummodo vel monachos ritum se-*
 “ *quentes ecclesie primitivae*: ——— And if we believe
 “ *Philostorgius*, the *Gothick Churches* were plant-
 “ ed and governed by *Presbyters*, for above *Seven-*
 “ *ty Years*; for so long it was from their first Con-
 “ version to the Time of *Ulphilas*, whom he makes
 “ their first Bishop, &c.

You see, Sir, that Instances have been given of
 Churches settled *without Bishops*, long before the
 Time you speak of. And some of them gave such
 Satisfaction to the learned Person before cited,
 that he thought them sufficient Evidence for the
 Point he was maintaining. How these Passages
 could escape you, methinks is somewhat surprizing,
Stillingsfleet's Irenicum being so celebrated a Book,
 and so generally read. But I had rather impute
 this to a Failure of your Memory, than enter-
 tain a Suspicion about the Sincerity of your Ma-
 nagement.

Should you, after all, insist upon it, that an *un-*
interrupted Succession of Persons, vested in those

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Powers, which is derivable from the Apostles, is necessary to that Apostolical *Fellowship*, which will denominate a Church *Apostolical*, pray oblige me and the World with a *List* of Names, which will clearly make out such an *uninterrupted Succession* of Ministers in your Church, and demonstrate, that none of them came in after a surreptitious Manner, without Episcopal Ordination. And, on that Condition, I will undertake to do the same on the *Dissenters* Part. And, be as quick as you will, I dare promise that my *List* shall be ready as soon as yours. But Bishop Hoadly is certainly in the right when he says, that *this regular uninterrupted Succession of Persons qualified, and regularly ordained, is impossible to be proved* *.

Your *Bishops* however " can (you say, P. 19.) derive their Authority from the Times of the Apostles, with *as uninterrupted a Succession* as any other Church can pretend to do, not excepting the Church of *Rome* it self ". But pray, why all this Caution, and what Occasion was there for your being so much upon the Reserve? Either you do believe the *uninterrupted Succession* which you speak of, or you do not. If you do believe it, why had you not asserted it in express terms, and proved it too? If you do not believe it, why would you insinuate it to the People, and impose upon their Credulity? These are Questions which, I

* Preservative, &c. P. 78.

think, you are concerned to answer to your self and the World. In the mean time, I am persuaded of your being so far in the right, that you can pretend to *as uninterrupted* a Succession as any other Church, that is, in short, to none at all. Your saying, that you will not except *the Church of Rome it self*, gives no Strength to your Claim ; the Succession in that Church (even in the times nearest to the Apostles, without tracing it through the following Ages) being *as muddy as the Tiber it self* *. This, however, is a Complement which that Church will thank you for, though it be plain enough, that it is to serve your own Ends : For all the World must allow, that it is impossible for you to make out *your* Succession, but through *theirs* ; and that if any Link in *that* falls, there must be an End to *yours* too.

And now, I hope, you will allow me to ask what Reason you have to say as you do, P. 20. “ We “ may justly object to our *Dissenting* Teachers their “ want of a *lawful Call* to the Ministry, setting “ themselves up for Teachers in Opposition to the “ *Authority* of the *Bishops* of the Church, to whose “ *Office* it belongs to send Ministers into the Lord’s “ Vineyard ” ? I own, Sir, that you are at Liberty to object what you think fit. But whether your Objections are just or not, is another Consideration, about which your Readers should suspend

* *Stillingfleet's Irenicam*, P. 322.

their Judgment, till they see some Evidence to incline them to be of your Mind. And, as far as I can find, they are like to wait long enough for this. It is not sufficient to tell the World, that the *Bishops* have such an Authority in the Church as you are pleading for, and that it belongs to their Office (exclusive of *Presbyters*) to *ordain* Ministers, and to send them into the Vineyard; but the *jus Divinum* of the *Episcopal* Authority must be cleared up, and Scripture Arguments produced to prove, that the *sole Power* of *Ordination* is lodg'd in the Bishops Hands; and till this is done, all that you say, is but begging the Question. The Passages in the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, which you are pleased to refer us to, can be of no Service to you in this Debate, before you make it appear that *Timothy* had a *fixed* Relation to the Church of *Ephesus*, and *Titus* to that of *Crete*, and that these were their *ordinary* Charge. And moreover, that the Power of *Ordination* was so vested in them, that the *Presbyters* which they ordained in these Places were not authorized to ordain other *Presbyters*; which we shall not easily be prevailed with to believe, because we know that *Timothy* himself, was ordained by the *laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery*, 1 Tim. iv. 14. A Text which (after all the Attempts have been made to wrest it from us) fully satisfies us, that the Power of *ordaining* did then, and doth now belong to *Presbyters*, and that *Ordination* by them is *valid*. So that if God is pleased to furnish us with Abilities to serve him in the Ministry, and

inclines us, by his Grace, to devote our selves to that holy Calling : If we are solemnly set apart to it by Fasting, Prayer, and the Imposition of Hands, and the People desire us to preach to them, and chuse us for their Instructors, and spiritual Guides ; you must allow us to think, that *our* Call is as clear and as lawful as *yours*, though we do not apply to the *Diocesan* Bishops for their *Approbation* and *Orders*. And in this we are the more confirmed, because there is Reason to hope, that God is pleased to own our Ministry, by making it useful to many Souls.

Though we cannot therefore take it very kindly, that you represent us to the World (as the *Nonjurors* do you, and the *Papists* do all the *Reformed*) to be *Thieves* and *Robbers*, P. 20. Yet if we may be so happy as to hear Christ, the chief Shepherd, say to us in the great Day of Account, *Well done, good and faithful Servants*, I hope we shall not be disturb'd at any of your Censures. In the mean time it may not be improper for our Brethren, who are so fond of transmitting us to Posterity, under the worst of Characters, to enquire into their own *Call*. I need not tell you, that when any enter upon the Office of *Deacons*, they are asked, " Do you trust, that you are *inwardly moved* by the *Holy Ghost*, to take upon you this Office, to serve God for the promoting his Glory, and the edifying his People" ? To which the Answer is, *I trust so*. Now, though I am now fully persuaded, that there are many of the Clergy of the Church

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of *England*, who made that Answer with the ut-
 most Sincerity : Yet Charity must be very much
 stretch'd, if we suppose that *all* in holy Orders did
 so. And do you think that such as did not, have a
 clear Call to the Service of the Altar ? I am sure
 excellent Bishop *Burnet* was not of that Mind ;
 When a *Clergyman* (saith that great Prelate *)
 is asked, *Do you trust that you are inwardly moved*
by the Holy Ghost, &c ? and answers, *I trust so,*
 that yet knows nothing of any such *Motion*, and
 can give no Account of it, he *lies* to the *Holy*
Ghost ; ----- and how can one expect to be recei-
 ved by God, or be *sent* or *sealed* by him, that
 dares do a thing of so crying a Nature ? I had
 no Intention, when I entered upon the Considera-
 tion of your Discourse, to take Notice of this ;
 but I can't see any Hurt in minding you of it,
 that when you are disputing and denying *our* Call,
 you may consider, that there are not a few among
 those of your Church, that would be at a Loss to
 defend their *own*. The learned Monsieur *Claude's*
 Notion of a *Call* to the Ministry seems to me very
 just. " It is (says he †) but a *Relation* which re-
 sults from the *Agreement* of *three Wills*, to wit,
 that of *God's*, that of the *Church*, and that of the
 " *Person called*". Now, Sir, whenever you are dis-
 posed to examine *your* Call and *ours* by the Con-

* Pastoral Care, P. 111.
 † Historical Defence of the Refor-
 mation, P. 59.

sent of the three Wills, I will endeavour to attend you in such an Examination, and, I hope, the Issue may be as much in our Favour as in yours.

Thus I have considered your *second* Mark of an *Apostolical Church*; and notwithstanding all that you have advanced, I can't see but it is *fulfilled* (as you express it) in *our Churches*, as well as in the *Church of England*. I proceed now to consider,

3. The *third* Character the Text gives of an *Apostolical Church*, which is (as you observe, P. 14.) "that they joined together in *breaking of Bread*," that is, in partaking of the Lord's Supper". This, you say, P. 15. was in the first Ages of Christianity, *look'd upon as a necessary Part of the Christian Worship*, which they performed daily; and for some Ages after the Times of the Apostles, *never omitted it upon the Days of their publick and solemn Assemblies*. And, P. 20. you tell us, "It is the *Desire* of our Church, that the Celebration of the Lord's Supper may be reduced to its *primitive Frequency*". But how does it appear, that it is the *Desire* of your Church that the Sacrament should be so *often* administer'd? One would think that there should be no better way of knowing the *Desire* of the Church, than by her *Orders*. Now you are very sensible, that the *Canon* relating to the *Holy Eucharist* only says, that "in every *Parish Church and Chappel*, where Sacraments are to be administer'd within this Realm, the Holy Communion shall be administer'd at least *thrice* in the

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Year *. And does this shew a Desire of having
 solemnized every Lord's Day, as was customary in
 the primitive Church? Or will any think, that
 you shew a greater Regard to that Ordinance than
 the Dissenters do, when in the most of your Pa-
 rishes you have it no oftener than the Canon di-
 rects; whereas in the greatest Part of our Con-
 gregations it is more frequent, and in many eve-
 ry Month? Your saying, P. 16. "Many of our
 Dissenters look upon hearing Sermons as the
 principal Part of religious Worship, and are not
 sensible of the Obligations lying upon all Chri-
 stians, to remember the Death of Christ in the
 Sacrament of the Lord's Supper", proves no
 more (supposing it true) than that we have some
 among us, who set one Ordinance of the Gospel
 too much above another; and don't shew that Re-
 gard to all our Saviour's Institutions that they
 should do. And may I not, with as much Rea-
 son, say the same concerning many among you?
 Are there not more than a few in your Churches,
 who think that saying their Prayers, is all that they
 need concern themselves about, in the Worship of
 God? And is it not common for Persons, to put on
 a more than ordinary shew of Devotion, while the
 Liturgy is reading, and yet behave, while the Mi-
 nister is in the Pulpit, as if a Sermon was not worth
 minding? I my self have seen scandalous Instances

* Canon 21.

of this more than once, and heard it oftener complained of, by some serious Persons of your own Communion as Matter of Grief and Shame. And as to the *Lord's Supper*, you have as much Cause as we, to lament its being too much neglected. In most of your Parishes the Number of Communicants is very small; and, without doubt, it would be much smaller, if *receiving the Sacrament* was not made a *Qualification* for *Places of Honour and Profit*, and some had not a greater Regard to their *temporal Interest*, than to *Conscience and Duty*. Your way of talking therefore, will conclude as much against your selves, as against us. But, after all, nothing can be more unjust, than to condemn any Communion, for the Faults of *some* of its Members. We are now to consider,

4. The *fourth* Character by which you say, P. 16. the *Apostolical Church* is described, *viz. Their joining together in publick Prayer*. And in this too we agree with the primitive Church as well as you; solemn Prayer being a constant Part of Worship in our Assemblies, as well as in yours. I confess, if your *Liturgy* had been composed by the Apostles themselves; or did it appear that *they always used one*; or could you shew us any *Directions* given, by *them*, to the *Government* of the Church in succeeding Ages, to draw up *Forms of Prayers* for the People to make use of at all Times, and to oblige Congregations invariably to keep to them, I would readily own, that you are more *Apostolical* than we: But none of these things being proved, while we *join together in publick*

publick Prayer, and this Part of Worship is managed (as we are perswaded it is) as the Word of God directs; you must not think it a Presumption, if we maintain, that your last Character of an *Apostolical Church*, belongs to us, *as much* as to you: If we should say *more*, perhaps you would think us too assuming, but we are convinced that we should say no more than is true.

I should now proceed to several things which you have offered under the Head of *Prayer*; but, if you please, I will leave these for a Moment or two; because I have now a fair Opportunity to ask you what you mean by saying, as you do, P. 10.

"The *Unity* of the *Church* does not consist in a bare Communion of *Faith* and *Love*, as our *Dissenters* pretend; but likewise in a joint Participation of the *outward Ordinances* appointed by Christ to be observed in his Church". As our *Dissenters* pretend!

Pray, Sir, what is it that they pretend? Do you mean that they pretend, that the *Unity* of the Church does so consist in a *Communion* of *Faith* and *Love*, that Christians are under *no Obligations* to join in the *Ordinances* which Christ has instituted?

If this be your Meaning, we complain of it as a very great *Injury* to us, as well as to Truth. I challenge you, Sir, to mention the Dissenter that pretends any such thing. All that know us are sensible, that we are as much for *external Communion* as you. Our Practice (as I have made appear under the two last Heads) is a Demonstration to the World of the Respect which we pay to our

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Saviour's

Saviour's Institutions; and, I could point out to you the time (which some of your Church very well remember) when *Dissenters* exposed themselves to *Fines, Prisons*, and a great many other *Hardships*, for the sake of having the Benefit of Christ's *Ordinances*. So that if your Design was to represent us as having *no Regard* to *external Communion*, I must take the Liberty to say, that you insinuate a thing that is evidently false. We do indeed pretend, that the *Unity* of the *Church Catholick* is a *Unity of the Spirit*, and so the *Apostle* calls it, *Ephes. iv. 3.* but we maintain, at the same time, that where there is this *Unity*, there will be a due *Regard* to *all the Ordinances*, which Christ has instituted in the Church, and a Care to live in *external Communion* with it: though this *external Communion* must be allowed to be a Way by which we discover our *Unity* with the Church, rather than the *Unity* it self. And, as far as I can perceive, your Opinion about this is the same with mine: for, though you tell us, that *the Unity of the Church is founded upon external Bonds* — as well as an *internal Union with Christ, and the Holy Spirit* (which you will hardly be able to maintain, seeing there are Cases to be mentioned, in which Persons may be in *Unity* with the *Catholick Church*, when they have no Opportunities of having *external Communion* with any Part of it) yet, *P. 11.* you call *outward Acts of Communion*, a *Manifestation of Union*, plainly distinguishing between the *Unity* and *Manifestation* of it. There are some other things in the above-men-

tioned Page, which I might take Notice of, but I must remember, that we have not, as yet, ballanced Accounts about *Prayers*, and therefore I return to that Part of your Sermon.

That your *Liturgy* is so *beautiful* and *exact* as you represent it, P. 21. is what all cannot agree with you in. However, since you are so much pleased with it, I shall not try your Temper by saying, that you have been too liberal of your *Encomiums*. But then you must bear with me, while I examine the “*Advantage* which (you say, P. 21.) a well composed *Form* has, for the edifying both Minister and People”, above that Way of praying which is used in Dissenting Congregations.

Now, with Respect to the Minister, you tell us, P. 22. “It is easier for him, who is the Mouth of the Congregation, to join devoutly in a Form of Prayer which is already made to his Hands, than when his Mind is distracted with studying what to say next”. As to this, Sir, without doubt you speak as you think; and it is very probable, that should some Ministers be called upon, by an Emergency of Providence, to pray without a Form, they would be very much at a Loss what to say next, because it is what they were never used to. But, if others, after a long Practice, find no such Distraction in their Thoughts as you speak of, what you say can, with such, have no Weight. And, I am well assured, there are a great many who will tell you, that they find themselves composed, and free from Confusion of Thought

in Prayer, without a *Form*, as they could be, had they one before them: Let a Man think before hand, what Sins are to be confessed, what Mercies are to be desired, and what Favours and Benefits he is to praise God for; let him, by Premeditation and earnest Prayer in secret, for the Direction and Assistance of the Holy Spirit, endeavour to prepare to address the Throne of Grace as the Mouth of an Assembly, and he need not doubt of being able to pray without Distraction. And then as the People, when you have said all they themselves know what is most for their own *Edification* better than you; and if they have found their Hearts more affected, and their Devotion more warm and fervent without a Form than with it, it will be impossible for you, to perswade them to believe, what is against their own Experience. I know you take a great deal of Pains, to represent it very difficult, for the Hearers to join in such Prayers, as the Dissenters offer up to God; but the Difficulty is certainly more in your own Imagination than in the Nature of the thing. You mistake, Sir, if you think there is need of so much Application of Mind to understand the *Sense* of the Words which we use in the Duty I am now speaking of. Our Prayers are as intelligible as yours, and the Meaning of our Expressions as easy and obvious. To which I add, that the language of the Scriptures, to which we are no Strangers, is generally chosen as most proper and agreeable, for

that

be, had that the Difficulty which you insist so much upon, is, in Reality, none.

But (if your Word must be taken) we have in our Prayers so many *Incoherences*, and *improper Expressions* as shew how little such Prayers have of a true Spirit of Devotion, and such as might recommend them to the Acceptance of God, or promote true Piety in the Hearers, P. 23.

I see, Sir, that you are resolved to charge home, and to expose our Worship as much as is in your Power. But, by your Leave, on what Grounds do you say, that there are such *Incoherences* and *improper Expressions* in the Dissenters Prayers? You have pronounced it to be such an unwarrantable thing (as we shall see presently) to go to a separate Congregation, that you can't be supposed to speak what you do from your own Knowledge. And, I submit it to your Consideration, whether you do not lessen your Character as often as you bring an *idle Story* into the Pulpit. Not but that there may be Incoherence, and Expressions that may not be so proper, in a *conceived* (or, as you call it, an *Extempore*) Prayer, and so there may be in a *Form of Prayer*, and in a *Sermon* too. But to suggest (as you plainly do) that there is wanting a *true Spirit of Devotion* in the Dissenters Prayers, and that they have little or no Tendency to *promote true Piety* in the Hearers, is rash and uncharitable. Whether there be a *true Spirit of Devotion* or no, in Persons that pray, is known only to the Searcher of Hearts; and I am sorry to see, that you should pretend

pretend to any Part of the Divine Prerogative. As to *true Piety*, there is, without doubt, too much Reason to bewail the sad Decay of it in the Christian World; and it is the Grief of all good Men, that there is no more of it to be seen among us and you. But your Censure makes it necessary for me to say, that if the Tendency of *our Prayers* and *yours to promote Piety in the Hearers*, may be estimated by their *Lives*, I am apt to believe, that upon an Enquiry into the Behaviour, of those that attend on your Ministry and ours, it would appear that your Reflection on this Head might very well have been spared. There is nothing indeed in our Prayers (nor is there in yours) that can *recommend them to the Acceptance of God*, which is only to be expected through the *Intercession* of our glorious *Advocate*, who is continually soliciting his Father to receive and answer the humble, though polluted Addressee, of sincere Worshippers; but we hope, that God hath frequently *answered* the Supplications, which have been offered up to him in *our Assemblies*; and from thence we draw this comfortable conclusion, that for Christ's sake, though not for our own, our Prayers have been *accepted*.

Your Notion, that *it seems impossible without a settled Form of Prayer, to preserve not only the Gravity, but even the Orthodoxy of publick Worship*, is very groundless; but if it could be proved to be true, it would conclude as much for your being tied to *Homilies* as well as to a *Liturgy*; the *Ortho-*

any of publick Worship, being in as much Dan-
 ger, by leaving Persons to compose their own Ser-
 mons as their *Prayers*. So that if they are to be
 confined in one Case, there's the same Reason for
 confining them in the other. And if we were once
 come to that, one that is no *Pains-taking Man* (to
 speak in your own Way) would be qualified for a
 good Benefice (or two) if he had *Interest* enough to
 help him to Preferment in the Church.

Before I dismiss this Head of *Prayer*, it may
 be proper to look back on your *marginal Note*,
 which we meet with, P. 11. "It is notorious that
Comin and *Heath*, two *Popish Priests*, were the
 first setters up of *Extempore Prayers* in *England*,
 in the Beginning of *Queen Elizabeth's* Reign".
 A goodly Story! But how does it appear to be
 fact? Could you have produced the Authority of
 the learned *Cambden*, *Eachard*, or any other valuable
 Historian for what you say, you might have ex-
 pected that Credit would be given to it; but the
Tramphlet which you quote having so little Repu-
 tation in the World, such as have a greater Re-
 gard to *Truth* than to the Interest of a *Party*, will
 look upon your *Tale* as ridiculous, and reject it
 with the Contempt which it deserves. And would
 you but read the *Answer to Dr. Scott's Cases against*
Dissenters, concerning Forms of Prayer, (in which it is
 plainly proved, that the Story of *Heath* and *Comin*,
 which you have received, has in it all the Marks
 of a glaring *Falshood*.) I am perswaded, that if a
 second Impression of your Discourse should be cal-
 led

led for, you would order *Foxes* and *Firebrands* to be left out of the Margin. And the rather, because that venerable Author has told the World that among other Instructions which the *Emissaries* of *Rome* received concerning their Management in *England*, this was one, " If you own your selves
 " *Clergymen*, then to preach, but with Caution, till ye be well acquainted with those *Heretics* you converse with; and then, by Degrees add to your Doctrine, by CEREMONIES or otherwise, as you find them inclineable" *.

One thing I had almost forgot, and that is, that several learned and pious *Bishops* of the Church of *England*, and many excellent Persons among the inferior *Clergy*, have recommended conceived Prayer, and practiced it too, and some use it to this Day. *Bishop Wilkins*, who was highly valued and revered by all that knew him†, published a Discourse concerning the *Gift of Prayer*, in which (speaking about a Person's confining himself to a *Form*) " says he,
 " P. 11. How can such a Man sute his Desires unto several Emergencies? What one says of *Council* to be had from *Books*, may be fitly applied to this *Prayer by Book*, that 'tis commonly, of itself, something flat and dead, floating, for the most Part, too much in *Generalities*, and not particular enough for each several Occasion. There is not *Life* and *Vigour* in it to engage the

* *Foxes and Firebrand's*, 2d Edit. printed at *Dublin*, 2 Part, p. 291.
 † *Tillotson's* Preface to *Bishop Wilkins's* Sermons.

" Affections, as when it proceeds immediately from
 " the Soul it self, and is the natural Expression of
 " those Particulars whereof we are most sensible."

These were that great Man's Sentiments; and therefore, to excite Christians to labour after the *Gift of Prayer*, he takes notice of its *Excellency*, its *Suitableness* and *Necessity*, its special *Advantages*; and the *Inconveniencies* that a Man will be expos'd unto for the Want of it. And gives it as his Opinion, that *Ministers* are more especially concern'd in this *Gift*, and that it is a *Fault* and *Shame* for them to be without it. Pious Bishop *Hall*, who was so great an *Ornament* to the Church of *England*, pray'd upon Occasion, as the Dissenters do; and some of the best Ministers of your Church do the same. You should therefore, I think, have better considered Things, before you had presumed to say, that the *Emissaries* of *Rome* were the first Setters up of *free Prayer* in *England*.

That which next follows in the Marginal Note; taken Notice of before, I suppose is your own, viz. " Since that Time, there can be Instances given of *Popish Priests* preaching in *seperate Meetings*, &c." It may be so: But till you think fit to let us know their Names, and to tell us when and where they preach'd, what you say must go for slander. Mention, Sir, if you can, any *Popish Priests* that have preach'd, since the Act of *Uniformity*, among those Dissenters for whom I am an Advocate. And I believe I shall be at no Loss to find as many, and more, that have officiated in the Church of *England* within that Time. What

your End was, in Printing the Passage which I before remark'd, I will not pretend to say: But you must allow me to tell you, that the Dissenters are fully convinced, that the * Spirit of Popery breaths nothing but Confusion, to the civil and religious Rights of a Protestant Church and Kingdom; and therefore have always opposed it with Sincerity and Zeal. And when a *dangerous Conspiracy* (as we are told from the Throne) *has been for some Time formed* against his Majesty's Person and Government, in favour of a *Popish Pretender*, and some abandoned Men, in despite of all Obligations divine and human, have engaged in this wicked Design, not one Protestant Dissenter has been charg'd with having any hand in the Villany.

I am now come to the *Conclusion* of your Discourse. And here you exhort your People to continue steadfast in the Communion of a Church so truly *Primitive* and *Apostolical*, (p. 24.) And that this Exhortation may make the deeper Impression, say you, "Some think there is no Harm in going to a separate Congregation to hear a good Thing, as they express it; But why should Men do an ill Thing only in order to hear a good one?" Right, Sir, prove it to be an ill Thing to worship God in a separate Congregation, and your Way of Reasoning all will allow to be very conclusive. But how will you do this? Let us hear your Argument. "I think I may justly call it an ill Thing, for those who are profess'd Members of our Church, to go to separate Meetings; for this is to encourage

* His Majesty's Speech to the Parliament, Octob. 11th, 1722.

“ that *Schism* and Division, which in their own Judgment they ought to condemn.”

Well, now we see what it is that you are aiming at. The *Dissenters* (according to your Way of Talking) are chargeable with the *Guilt* of *Schism*: And going to a separate Meeting, is encouraging of that *Schism*; and therefore an *ill* Thing. Right, still, provided it can be made out, that the *Dissenters* are guilty of *Schism*. But, till this is done, we are but where we were; and as yet it does not appear, that there is any more Harm in Hearing the *Dissenting* Minister in *Petersfield*, than the *Rector* of the Parish. That *Schism* (the Sin, I mean, which is called by that Name) is a very great Evil, we believe as well as you; and there's no Doubt but Mr. *Baxter's* Aggravations of it, which you mention, (p. 25.) are very just. But if you will make that to be *Schism* which is not so, and pronounce those to be *Schismatics* against whom you are not able to make good so invidious a Charge; your calling Names will be of very little Service to you. But, if you please, let us enter a little farther into this Argument.

Schism then, (according to your Account of it, p. 25.) “ Is a causeless Separation from the Communion of the Church:” On which I would beg Leave, to make the following Remarks, *viz.*

1, You need not, I am sure, be told, that one Thing necessary, to make a *Definition* good, is, its being *universal*, that is to say, it ought to contain the whole Thing defined. Now, nothing is more evident, than that your *Definition* of *Schism* wants

this Property. The *Corinthian* Christians, you know, met to worship God in one and the same Place; and there was no Party that proceeded so far as to set up a separate Communion from the rest, and yet because they fell into *uncharitable Heats* and *Contentions*, and did not *love* one another as they should have done; the Apostle tells them, that he heard that there were *Divisions* (*σχίσματα*) among them, 1 *Cor.* xi. 18. So that here was *Schism* without a *Separation* from the Communion of the Church.

2. Your saying that *Schism* is a causeless Separation from the Communion of the Church, if you mean by the Church, the Church of England, looks as if you appropriated the Name of the Church to your selves, to the Exclusion of all that don't belong to your Communion: And if this be your Intention, you are to the last Degree uncharitable, and the Guilt of *Schism* will lie at your own Door.

3. Supposing your *Definition* of *Schism* to be very just, those *Protestant Dissenters*, whose Defence I am undertaking, conceive themselves clear of the Guilt which you are so forward to charge them with, for as much as their Separation from the Church of England, is so far from being *Causeless*, that, after a serious Consideration of all Circumstances, they think they have Reasons that are abundantly sufficient to justify their leaving your Communion. You will say, without doubt, that they have not. But, who must judge? If the *established Church* must always determine in this Case, which Way can the Reformation be defended? For, to be sure, in the Opinion of the Church of

Rome,

know, *Rome*, our Separation from their Communion was
auseless. But if the *People* must judge for them-
 selves, (which is the *Protestant Principle*) when they
 are fully convinced they have a sufficient Warrant
 to leave your Church, their Separation cannot be
auseless, and therefore not *schismatical*, according
 to your own Definition of *Schism*. You say, I know,
 That nothing else can justify a Separation from
 the established Church, but its requiring *unlaw-
 ful Terms of Communion*:” (p. 27.) But (al-
 lowing you to be right as to that, though I am sa-
 tisfied you are not) the Question will still return,
 Who shall judge whether your Church requireth *un-
 lawful Terms of Communion* or no? If this be the
 Right of the People, then it will follow, that if
 there were several Things in the Constitution, Dis-
 cipline and Worship of the Church of *England*,
 which they are fully persuaded are not agreeable to
 the Word of God; and some Terms of Commu-
 nion which they cannot, without making their Con-
 sciences uneasy, comply with, such Terms are to
 them *unlawful*, though others don’t think them so.
 Thus, for Instance, if there are those who think
 that the Liberty of chusing their own Ministers, is
 a Privilege which they ought on no Considerations
 to part with; and that, as the Church of *England*
 is established, this is taken from them: If it goes
 against them to receive the holy Sacrament with
scandalous Livers, when they can have the Advan-
 tage and Comfort of a more *pure* Communion: If
 they reckon the *Cross* in Baptism an *Addition* to
 Christ’s Institution, and can’t be reconcil’d to the
 procuring *covenanting Sponsors* for their Children, when
 they

they are convinced that it is their Duty to covenant for them in Person: If they think it an unwarrantable Confinement to be obliged at *all Times* to use a *Form* of Words in Prayer, &c. While these are their settled Apprehensions, the Terms of Conformity are to them *unlawful*, and therefore their Separation is to be justified. A very learned Person, and the best Advocate that ever the Church of *England* had (the present Bishop of *Hereford*) has told the World his Sentiments about this, in the following remarkable Words, *viz.* * “ If there be
 “ Persons who will be perswaded by no Arguments, that a Compliance with those Terms is in
 “ it self *Lawful*, I confess it is my Opinion, that
 “ while they are thus perswaded, it is as much
 “ their *Duty* to *Separate* from us, as it is our Duty
 “ to *Separate* from the Church of *Rome*. For they,
 “ as well as we, are obliged not to do what they
 “ judge to be *Unlawful*, and they, as much as we,
 “ ought to assemble themselves for the Worship of
 “ God, and the Enjoyment of his Ordinances”.
 Thus, I hope, it appears, that the Dissenters are not guilty of the *Schism* which you charge them with, and that Persons may worship God in their Assemblies without doing an *ill Thing*. The Apostle, I know, beseeches Christians to *mark them which cause Divisions and Offences*, and to avoid them, Rom. xvi. 17. But the Dissenters think (and some of the most eminent *Conformists* have own'd as much †)

* The Reasonableness of Conformity, 3d Edit. p. 182.

† The most vehement *Accusers* are the greatest *Offenders*: --- The greatest *Schismatics* are such as make the *Way* to Heaven narrower, the *Yolk* of Christ heavier; --- the *Conditions* of Ecclesiastical *Communion* harder and stricter, than they were made at the Beginning by Christ and his Apostles. They who talk of

That the *Imposers* of human Inventions, and such as make them *necessary* Terms of Communion, are the Persons that *cause Divisions* and *Offences*. And though you have a quite different Notion of it) they think it be their Duty to assert their Christian Liberty, by leaving those who will not allow them the Privileges of Christians upon Christ's Terms, and joining with others, who make no other Conditions of Communion than the Scriptures have made.

You may talk as long as you please of the People's *heaping up Teachers* to themselves, only to *gratify their itching Ears*, but if they can appeal to God, who knows their Hearts better than you do, that they have higher Views, and that it is his Honour and their own eternal Good which they are aiming at, none of your Reflections will be able to move them.

But, say you, p. 26. "Are such Persons sure that they shall hear nothing but what is *good* in such Assemblies". I reply by asking you the same Question, Are Persons sure that they shall hear nothing but what is *good* in your Churches? Is it not likely (to talk as you do) that several things will be said there to enflame the Passions of Men, and to create Differences and Animosities among Christians? Is there not a great deal of Uncharitableness in many of your Sermons? Are not ho-

Unity but aim at Tyranny, and will have Peace with none but their Slaves and Vassals. *Chillingworth's Relig. of Protest. &c.* Chap. 3. Sect. 81. The main Inlet of all the *Distractions, Confusions* and *Divisions* of the Christian World, hath been By adding other Conditions of Church Communion, than Christ hath done, *Stillingsfleet's Iren. Pref.*

neft and confciencious Diffenters, who behave well, live as peaceably, and are as much afraid of offending God as any of you, too often slandered and misrepresented to the World? These things could be proved by a Cloud of Witnesses, if there was need of it. The *Prebendary* who Preached in your Church at *Petersfield* no longer ago than the 17th of June last, delivered several Passages in his Discourse, which I am confident he will not easily be able to defend, and I submit it to his own Conscience, whether his Design was not to blacken the Diffenters, and to reproach them and their Worship? If it was, I am sure the Persons that were at Church that Day heard something more than was good there.

Well, but what are those sad things which it is likely People will hear if they go to our Assemblies? As to this, you say, "Is it not likely several things will be said there to keep up *Schism* and Division, and to condemn *Order* and *Decency* in the Worship of God. --- May we not likewise suppose, that some things may be said in those Places to the Disparagement of *bodily worship* in the Service of God, &c."

I find, Sir, that you have a very good Talent at *supposing*, and while your Hand was in, why had you not proceeded, and added to your other *Suppositions*, may we not suppose, that the *Alcoran* is read in Dissenting Congregations, or that they worship *graven Images*? But to be serious; Is it becoming a Divine or a Christian, to make *Suppositions* without any Reason, to the Prejudice of others?

Dr. Barrow takes Notice, " that one kind of Cal-
 " lummy is by instilling fly Suggestions, which, al-
 " though they do not downrightly assert Falshoods;
 " yet they breed sinister Opinions in the Hearers;
 " especially in those who from Weakness or Cre-
 " dulity, from Jealousy or Prejudice, from Negli-
 " gence or Inadvertency, are prone to entertain
 " them. ----- This is done many Ways ; by pro-
 " pounding wily Suppositions, shrewd Insinuat-
 " ons ; ----- intimating a Possibility, or inferring
 " some Likelihood of, and thence inducing to be-
 " lieve the Fact †. This is a Passage which I would
 recommend to your cool Thoughts, and, I hope,
 there is something in your own Bosom that will
 make a proper Application of it. In the mean
 time, let me tell you, that the Dissenters preach up
Love and Unity among Christians, as much as any
 of you, and are as much for *Order and Decency* in
 God's Service, though they cannot approve of some
 of the Ceremonies and Usages of your Church,
 which they think are introduced without any War-
 rant from God's Word. To which I add, that
 though we believe God to be a *Spiri.*, and that he
 ought (according to our blessed Saviour's Words,
John iv. 24.) to be worshipped, in *Spirit and in Truth*;
 yet we are, at the same time fully convinced, that
 he requireth not only the Service of our *Souls*, but
 of our *Bodies* too, and that we should (as often as
 we are capable of doing it) express our inward Devo-
 tion and Reverence of the Divine Majesty, by such

Postures as are most *decent* and *becoming* when we are in his Presence. This we plead for, and according to this we Practice in our Assemblies ; and I can't but wonder that you should insinuate the contrary. You may excuse this, Sir, how you will, but it will go with me for an undeniable Evidence, that such as attend the Service of your Church may sometimes hear things delivered from the Pulpit which cannot be made appear to be true, and therefore can't be call'd *good*.

As to *kneeling* in Prayer, so far are we from contradicting (as you are pleased to suggest) those Passages of Scripture, in which we find it mentioned, that we highly approve it ; and if this *Gesture* be not used in our Congregations, 'tis not from any Dislike of it, but because our Places of Worship will not allow of that, as well as of *standing*, which you can't but own to be a proper *Posture* for Prayer, as well as the other ; because we have many Examples * in the Scripture to recommend it, and the Clergy of your Church generally, if not always, stand, when they pray in the Pulpit, till they come to conclude with the Lord's Prayer. I know it is recorded of many eminent Persons, that they *kneeled* in the Duty which I am speaking of ; and that it is related of our Blessed Saviour, particularly when he *pray'd* to his Father (excuse my not using your Phrase, when he *said his Prayers* ; because I am perswaded he had no *Form* before him) that he *kneeled down* ; but till

* See Mr. Boyse's Remarks, &c. p. 105

you can prove *standing* to be an *irreverent Posture*, and shew, that it can't be called *bodily Worship*, your Charge against us on that Head cannot be reconciled with Honour or Justice. I shall only add, that if a Man was to go into the *Parish Churches* throughout the Kingdom, and to observe the Behaviour of your People in the Time of Divine Service; I am perswaded, that in most Churches where he found one really on his Knees in Prayers, he might see many *sitting* at their Devotion. Upon the Whole, as I am sufficiently acquainted with the Dissenters Way of Worship, and know the Practice of many of their Assemblies; so I am not altogether a Stranger to the Orders and Customs of the Church of *England*, and I solemnly profess it to be my real Opinion, that there is *as much Order and Decency*, and as proper Marks of *Reverence* both of *Body and Soul*, to be seen in our Congregations as in yours; and I am not without Hopes, that when you have calmly considered Matters, you will wish that you had not been so forward with your Censures, and delivered things from the *Pulpit* and *Press* before you had sufficiently examined them.

I am sorry, Sir, that you should appear to be so much out of Temper about the *Meeting of Protestant Dissenters* that is lately set up in your Town. You can't but allow, that all Mankind have a *Right* to serve God in such a Way as their Consciences pronounce to be the best; and if some of your Parish have claimed that *Right*, by agreeing to have Social and Publick Worship performed, as they

they think the Word of God directs, why should you be angry with them? Besides, you can't say, I hope, but that they continue as good Neighbours, live as quietly, and as much like Christians, as when they attended on the Worship of God in your Church; the Minister they have chosen (would you let him have the Honour of your Acquaintance) you would find to be a *Gentleman*, a *Scholar*, and a *Divine*, and one that would think himself very happy could he be instrumental in turning any to *Righteousness*, but scorn to busy himself in making *Projeayes* to a *Party*; and what Occasion can there be for your being disturb'd? Though the Number of Ministers, which are employed in the *Establishment*, and out of it, be very considerable, all are too few to *reform a wicked World*, and to revive the Power of Religion, which has, for some Years past, suffered such deplorable Decays; and, methinks, all good Men, (how different soever their Sentiments may be about disputable Points) should heartily join in carrying on so excellent a Work as that is.

As to the *Remarks* which I have made on your Discourse, the World must judge whether they are just, or not; but I have one Request to you before I take Leave, and that is, that if any thing unhandsome has been offered in any Part of this Letter, you would be so kind as to excuse it, as not being said with an affronting Design, and that you would believe me, when I assure you, that I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your Sincere Friend, and

Most humble Servant,

Partsmouth,
Dec. 16, 1722.

JOHN NORMAN